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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAMAKO 000385

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [ML](#)

SUBJECT: COMMISSION OF TUAREG LEADERS TO MEET WITH ADC AND  
BAHANGA

REF: A. BAMAKO 00375

[B](#). BAMAKO 00339

[C](#). 07 BAMAKO 00994

[D](#). 07 BAMAKO 01366

[E](#). 07 BAMAKO 01255

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako,  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: A commission of eight Tuareg leaders left Bamako for Kidal on April 18 to spend one month meeting with local officials, the rebel Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC) and Ibrahim Bahanga. The group is expected to meet with the ADC and Bahanga on April 21. Bahanga and the ADC forces are reportedly camped in the same location in the mountains to Tigharghar, but have not joined forces. The commission has the support of President Amadou Toumani Toure but does not speak on behalf of the Malian government and therefore cannot present any deliverables to the ADC or Bahanga - a fatal flaw according to ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi (Ref A). What the commission may provide, however, is new window for negotiations via the involvement of influential Kidal Tuaregs who have, until this point, been overshadowed by ag Bibi and ADC leader Iyad ag Ghali. Commission members include four high level Kidal Tuareg leaders - National Assembly Deputy Mohamed ag Intallah, former government Minister Mohamed ag Erlaf, presidential advisor Acherif ag Mohamed and Malian diplomat Abdurahmane Ghalla. Ghalla, who led a rebel faction during the 1991-1996 Tuareg rebellion and is now assigned to the Malian consulate in Tamanrasset, Algeria, spoke to the Embassy on April 15 about the commission's objectives, recent events in Kidal and prospects for peace. End Summary.

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President Toure a One-Man Show  
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2.(C) On April 14 a self-appointed commission of eight Tuareg leaders originally from Kidal met separately with President Toure and Minister of Territorial Administration, General Kafouguna Kone. According to Acherif and Ghalla, during the meeting President Toure offered his condolences for the two Tuaregs executed in Kidal April 10-11, expressed exasperation with Algerian mediation efforts and said he regretted involving Libya in negotiations with Ibrahim Bahanga given the failure of the Tripoli talks and Algeria's negative reaction. President Toure said he turned toward Tripoli not to send a message to Algeria, undermine the Algiers Accords or change mediators in mid-stream but to secure the release of Bahanga's 33 hostages.

3.(C) Ghalla reported that President Toure was attempting to

manage the northern crisis on his own, without the help or input of even his most trusted advisors. General Kafougouna Kone subsequently told Ghalla and other commission members that even he was unaware of the President's decision to involve Libya in the hostage negotiations with Bahanga. In contrast to a recent report by the French Ambassador to Mali (Ref A), Ghalla described the President as "tired" and "frustrated" by the lack of progress with Bahanga, the off-again on-again role of Algeria and the ineffectiveness of the Malian military.

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Tuareg Leaders Ignore Ag Bibi, Depart For Kidal  
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4.(C) ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi advised Ghalla and other commission members to postpone travel to Kidal until Foreign Minister Moctar Ouane returns from Algiers. He argued that the commission's inability to offer anything other than more talk to Tuareg rebels would render travel to Kidal pointless.

Ag Bibi may also be uneasy with non-ADC Tuareg leaders inserting themselves into the negotiation process. Up to this point, ADC leader Iyad ag Ghali has facilitated negotiations between the Malian government and Tuareg rebels.

While ag Ghali is an experienced political operator and rebel leader, many Tuaregs who are not from Kidal or do not regard themselves as rebels question ag Ghali's allegiances (Refs B and C). Ag Ghali, however, has been in Tripoli for several weeks, has repeatedly said he wants to leave Mali, and is supposed to report to a new job at the Malian consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Ref D). During ag Ghali's absence, Ag Bibi's authority over ADC members is open for debate given his thin credentials as a rebel and military

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leader. ADC officers with more solid military backgrounds, such as Lt. Col. Moussa Bah, who led the ADC forces out of Kidal on April 12, may be more natural replacements for ag Ghali.

5.(C) Abdurahmane Ghalla readily admitted that his commission was short on deliverables. "What are we bringing for Bahanga?" he asked rhetorically, "Nothing. Just advice to promote negotiations." Ghalla said the commission could still serve a useful purpose by opening a space for negotiations, even if it could promise nothing on behalf of the Malian government. He said the commission hoped to link up with another self-appointed group in Kidal, the so-called "Committee of Wise Men" which helped negotiate a cease-fire between Bahanga and the Malian military earlier this month.

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Ghalla's View of Executions, Bahanga and the ADC  
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6.(C) During the 1991-1996 rebellion Ghalla led the Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of the Azawad (ARLA) rebel movement. Until recently, he encumbered the position in Riyadh similar to the post to which ag Ghali was assigned to in Jeddah in late 2007. Ghalla was subsequently transferred, at his request, to the Malian consulate in Tamanrasset, Algeria. During his meeting with the Embassy, Ghalla complained that the application of the Algiers Accords was too slow and that while President Toure remained committed to a peaceful solution, some members of the Malian military - such as those he believed responsible for the recent executions - were actively sabotaging negotiation efforts. He attributed acts of sabotage within the military to discontent over promotions, low pay and plummeting morale. He said commission members were convinced the Malian military was responsible for the killings. At first, said Ghalla, he thought the killings were the result of an inter-Tuareg dispute, then considered whether they were carried out by AQIM sympathizers. Ghalla said that allegations of salafist involvement in the murders was simply "not true" and that the executions were committed by lower level members of the

Malian military acting outside of official orders.

7.(C) Although Ghalla supports the call for a investigation into the murders, he felt the likelihood of a credible inquiry was low, recalling that the inquiry into the killing of a Tuareg gendarme by Malian soldiers in October 2007 went nowhere (Ref E). He said the family of the dead gendarme had received no response to repeated requests for information on the progress of the murder investigation.

8.(C) Ghalla said he had no idea whether Bahanga was interested in money, securing smuggling routes through Tinzwaten or the genuine application of the Algiers Accords.

Given his position in Tamanrasset, Ghalla maintains close ties to Algerian diplomats. Ghalla said the Algerian Ambassador to Mali told him that Algeria would have arrested Bahanga in Tamanrasset in late 2007 "in a minute" had Mali issued an arrest warrant. President Toure will never issue such a warrant, said Ghalla, because he knows that the problem with Bahanga can only be solved through political means.

9.(C) The ADC, or some elements within the ADC, could very well align themselves with Bahanga, said Ghalla. He cautioned, however, that while the ADC and Bahanga could conceivably coordinate attacks, they remain politically distinct. Ghalla said his commission would advocate for the following points: a point by point timeline for Algiers Accords implementation, a solid cease-fire agreement and safe-passage for Malian military re-supply convoys via pre-approved corridors. Ghalla said it was not yet too late to prevent what could become Mali's third Tuareg rebellion. "No one," said Ghalla, "has declared war yet."

10.(C) Comment: We do not share ag Bibi's assessment that without the ability to promise concrete deliverables, the eight-man commission to Kidal is doomed to fail. Abdurahmane Ghalla and Mohamed ag Erlaf are two extremely well-respected Kidal Tuaregs who have, until now, been ignored by both the Malian government and the ADC. Even though promises from previous negotiation efforts remain unfulfilled, the decision of Ghalla, ag Erlaf, and the others to insert themselves into the process as good-faith negotiators will increase the number of Kidal leaders at the table and allow perspectives of Tuaregs other than Iyad ag Ghali to see daylight. In this

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sense, the commission may at least create some breathing space to reduce tensions and allow Malian and Algerian negotiators time to regroup. On April 21 Acherif ag Mohamed told the Embassy that he and six other commission members were leaving Kidal to meet the ADC and Bahanga in Tigharghar.

Ghalla, who planned to travel to Kidal via Tamanrasset, telephoned the Embassy from Algeria on April 21 to report that he was still in Tamanrasset, awaiting permission from the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to rejoin the commission in Kidal.

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